

# Time Line of African American History, 1852-1925

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The following works were valuable sources in the compilation of this Time Line: Lerone Bennett's *Before the Mayflower* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Co., 1982), W. Augustus Low and Virgil A. Clift's *Encyclopedia of Black America* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1984), and Harry A. Ploski and Warren Marr's *The Negro Almanac* (New York: Bellwether Co., 1976).

## 1852

**Daniel A. P. Murray born.** Born in Baltimore on March 3. Murray, an African-American, was assistant librarian of Congress, and a collector of books and pamphlets by and about black Americans.

**Publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.** Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, published on March 20, focused national attention on the cruelties of slavery.

## 1854

**Lincoln University chartered.** Initially known as Ashmun Institute, Lincoln University was chartered in Oxford, Pennsylvania, on January 1. It was one of America's earliest Negro colleges.

## 1856

**Booker Taliaferro Washington born.** Born in Franklin County, Virginia, on April 5, Washington was the first principal of Tuskegee Institute (1881), and was the individual most responsible for its early development. Washington was considered the leading African-American spokesman of his day.

## 1857

**Supreme Court rules on the Dred Scott case.** On March 6, the Supreme Court decided that an African-American could not be a citizen of the U.S., and thus had no rights of citizenship. The decision sharpened the national debate over slavery.

## 1859

**John Brown's raid.** On October 16-17, John Brown raided the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia (today located in West Virginia). Brown's unsuccessful mission to obtain arms for a slave insurrection stirred and divided the nation. Brown was hanged for treason on December 2.

**The last slave ship arrives.** During this year, the last ship to bring slaves to the United States, the *Clothilde*, arrived in Mobile Bay, Alabama.

## 1860

**Abraham Lincoln elected president.** Republican Abraham Lincoln was elected president on November 6, 1860.

### Census of 1860.

U.S. population: 31,443,790  
Black population: 4,441,790 (14.1%)

**1862**

**Slavery abolished in the District of Columbia.** Congress abolished slavery in the District of Columbia -- an important step on the road for freedom for all African-Americans.

**1863**

**The Emancipation Proclamation.** Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation took effect January 1, legally freeing slaves in areas of the South in rebellion.

**New York City draft riots.** Anti-conscription riots started on July 13 and lasted four days, during which hundreds of black Americans were killed or wounded.

**The Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Volunteers.** On July 18, the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Volunteers -- the all-black unit of the Union army portrayed in the 1989 Tri-Star Pictures film *Glory* -- charged Fort Wagner in Charleston, South Carolina. Sergeant William H. Carney becomes the first African-American to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor for bravery under fire.

**1864**

**Equal pay.** On June 15, Congress passed a bill authorizing equal pay, equipment, arms, and health care for African-American Union troops.

**The *New Orleans Tribune*.** On October 4, the *New Orleans Tribune* began publication. The *Tribune* was one of the first daily newspapers produced by blacks.

**1865**

**Congress approves the Thirteenth Amendment.** Slavery would be outlawed in the United States by the Thirteenth Amendment, which Congress approved and sent on to the states for ratification on January 31.

**The Freedmen's Bureau.** On March 3, Congress established the Freedmen's Bureau to provide health care, education, and technical assistance to emancipated slaves.

**Death of Lincoln.** On April 15, Abraham Lincoln was assassinated; Vice President Andrew Johnson, a Tennessee Democrat, succeeded him as president.

**Ratification of Thirteenth Amendment.** The Thirteenth Amendment, outlawing slavery, was ratified on December 18.

**1866**

**Presidential meeting for black suffrage.** On February 2, a black delegation led by Frederick Douglass met with President Andrew Johnson at the White House to advocate black suffrage. The president expressed his opposition, and the meeting ended in controversy.

**Civil Rights Act.** Congress overrode President Johnson's veto on April 9 and passed the Civil Rights Act, conferring citizenship upon black Americans and guaranteeing equal rights with whites.

**Memphis massacre.** On May 1-3, white civilians and police killed forty-six African-Americans and injured many more, burning ninety houses, twelve schools, and four churches in Memphis, Tennessee.

**The Fourteenth Amendment.** On June 13, Congress approved the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, guaranteeing due process and equal protection under the law to all citizens. The amendment would also grant citizenship to blacks.

**Police massacre.** Police in New Orleans stormed a Republican meeting of blacks and whites on July 30, killing more than 40 and wounding more than 150.

**Founding of the Ku Klux Klan.** The Ku Klux Klan, an organization formed to intimidate blacks and other ethnic and religious minorities, first met in Maxwell House, Memphis. The Klan was the first of many secret terrorist organizations organized in the South for the purpose of reestablishing white authority.

**1867**

**Black suffrage.** On January 8, overriding President Johnson's veto, Congress granted the black citizens of the District of Columbia the right to vote.

**Reconstruction begins.** Reconstruction Acts were passed by Congress on March 2. These acts called for the enfranchisement of former slaves in the South.

**1868**

**Fourteenth Amendment ratified.** On July 21, the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution was ratified, granting citizenship to any person born or naturalized in the United States.

**Thaddeus Stevens dies.** Thaddeus Stevens, Radical Republican leader in Congress and father of Reconstruction, died on August 11.

**Massacre in Louisiana.** The Opelousas Massacre occurred in Louisiana on September 28, in which an estimated 200 to 300 black Americans were killed.

**Ulysses S. Grant becomes president.** Civil War general Ulysses S. Grant (Republican) was elected president on November 3.

**1869**

**Fifteenth Amendment approved.** On February 26, Congress sent the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution to the states for approval. The amendment would guarantee black Americans the right to vote.

**First black diplomat.** On April 6, Ebenezer Don Carlos Bassett was appointed minister to Haiti -- the first black American diplomat and the first black American presidential appointment. For many years thereafter, both Democratic and Republican administrations appointed black Americans as ministers to Haiti and Liberia.

**1870**

**Census of 1870.**

U.S. population: 39,818,449

Black population: 4,880,009 (12.7%)

**The first African-American senator.** Hiram R. Revels (Republican) of Mississippi took his seat February 25. He was the first black United States senator, though he served only one year.

**Fifteenth Amendment ratified.** The Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution was ratified on March 30.

**1871**

**The Fisk University Jubilee Singers tour.** On October 6, Fisk University's Jubilee Singers began their first national tour. The Jubilee Singers became world-famous singers of black spirituals. The money they earned built Fisk University.

**1875**

**Civil Rights Act of 1875.** Congress approved the Civil Rights Act on March 1, guaranteeing equal rights to black Americans in public accommodations and jury duty. The legislation was invalidated by the Supreme Court in 1883.

**The first African-American to serve a full term as senator.** Blanche Kelso Bruce (Republican) of Mississippi took his seat in the United States Senate on March 3. He would become the first African-American to serve a full six-year term. Not until 1969 did another black American begin a Senate term.

**Birth of Mary McLeod Bethune.** Mary McLeod Bethune, educator, government official, and African-American leader, was born on July 10 in Mayesville, South Carolina.

**Clinton Massacre.** On September 4-6, more than 20 black Americans were killed in a massacre in Clinton, Mississippi.

**Birth of Carter Godwin Woodson.** Carter G. Woodson, who earned a doctorate in history from Harvard and was known as "The Father of Black History," was born on December 19, 1875, in New Canton, Virginia.

## 1876

**Race riots and terrorism.** A summer of race riots and terrorism directed at blacks occurred in South Carolina. President Grant sent federal troops to restore order.

**A close presidential election.** In the presidential election of 1876, the outcome in the Electoral College appeared too close to be conclusive in the campaign of Samuel Tilden (Democrat) versus Rutherford B. Hayes (Republican).

## 1877

**The end of Reconstruction.** A deal with Southern Democratic leaders made Rutherford B. Hayes (Republican) president, in exchange for the withdrawal of federal troops from the South and the end of federal efforts to protect the civil rights of African-Americans.

**The first African-American to graduate from West Point.** On June 15, Henry O. Flipper became the first black American to graduate from West Point.

## 1880

### Census of 1880.

U.S. population: 50,155,783

Black population: 6,580,793 (13.1%)

**James Garfield elected president.** On November 2, James A. Garfield, Republican, was elected president.

## Time Line of African American History, 1881-1900

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## 1881

- President Garfield assassinated.** President Garfield was shot on July 2; he died on September 19. Vice President Chester A. Arthur (Republican) succeeded Garfield as president.
- Tuskegee Institute founded.** Booker T. Washington became the first principal of Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama, on July 4. Tuskegee became the leading vocational training institution for African-Americans.
- Segregation of public transportation.** Tennessee segregated railroad cars, followed by Florida (1887), Mississippi (1888), Texas (1889), Louisiana (1890), Alabama, Kentucky, Arkansas, and Georgia (1891), South Carolina (1898), North Carolina (1899), Virginia (1900), Maryland (1904), and Oklahoma (1907).
- 1882**
- Lynchings.** Forty-nine black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1882.
- 1883**
- Civil Rights Act overturned.** On October 15, the Supreme Court declared the Civil Rights Act of 1875 unconstitutional. The Court declared that the Fourteenth Amendment forbids states, but not citizens, from discriminating.
- Sojourner Truth dies.** Sojourner Truth, a courageous and ardent abolitionist and a brilliant speaker, died on November 26.
- A political coup and a race riot.** On November 3, white conservatives in Danville, Virginia, seized control of the local government, racially integrated and popularly elected, killing four African-Americans in the process.
- Lynchings.** Fifty-three black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1883.
- 1884**
- Cleveland elected president.** Grover Cleveland (Democrat) was elected president on November 4.
- Lynchings.** Fifty-one black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1884.
- 1885**
- A black Episcopal bishop.** On June 25, African-American Samuel David Ferguson was ordained a bishop of the Episcopal church.
- Lynchings.** Seventy-four black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1885.
- 1886**
- The Carrollton Massacre.** On March 17, 20 black Americans were massacred at Carrollton, Mississippi.
- Labor organizes.** The American Federation of Labor was organized on December 8, signaling the rise of the labor movement. All major unions of the day excluded black Americans.
- Lynchings.** Seventy-four black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1886.
- 1887**
- Lynchings.** Seventy black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1887.
- 1888**
- Two of the first African-American banks.** Two of America's first black-owned banks -- the Savings Bank of the Grand Fountain United Order of the Reformers, in Richmond Virginia, and Capital Savings Bank of Washington, DC, opened their doors.

- Harrison elected president.** Benjamin Harrison (Republican) was elected president on November 6.
- Lynchings.** Sixty-nine black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1888.
- 1889**
- Lynchings.** Ninety-four black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1889.
- 1890**
- Census of 1890.**  
U.S. population: 62,947,714  
Black population: 7,488,676 (11.9%)
- The Afro-American League.** On January 25, under the leadership of Timothy Thomas Fortune, the militant National Afro-American League was founded in Chicago.
- African-Americans are disenfranchised.** The Mississippi Plan, approved on November 1, used literacy and "understanding" tests to disenfranchise black American citizens. Similar statutes were adopted by South Carolina (1895), Louisiana (1898), North Carolina (1900), Alabama (1901), Virginia (1901), Georgia (1908), and Oklahoma (1910).
- A white supremacist is elected.** Populist "Pitchfork Ben" Tillman was elected governor of South Carolina. He called his election "a triumph of ... white supremacy."
- Lynchings.** Eighty-five black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1890.
- 1891**
- Lynchings.** One hundred and thirteen black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1891.
- 1892**
- Grover Cleveland elected president.** Grover Cleveland (Democrat) was elected president on November 8.
- Lynchings.** One hundred and sixty-one black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1892.
- 1893**
- Lynchings.** One hundred and eighteen black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1893.
- 1894**
- The Pullman strike.** The Pullman Company strike caused a national transportation crisis. On May 11, African-Americans were hired by the company as strike-breakers.
- Lynchings.** One hundred and thirty-four black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1894.
- 1895**
- Douglass dies.** African-American leader and statesman Frederick Douglass died on February 20.
- A race riot.** Whites attacked black workers in New Orleans on March 11-12. Six blacks were killed.
- The Atlanta Compromise.** Booker T. Washington delivered his famous "Atlanta Compromise" address on September 18 at the Atlanta Cotton States Exposition.

He said the "Negro problem" would be solved by a policy of gradualism and accommodation.

**The National Baptist Convention.** Several Baptist organizations combined to form the National Baptist Convention of the U.S.A.; the Baptist church is the largest black religious denomination in the United States.

**Lynchings.** One hundred and thirteen black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1895.

## 1896

***Plessy v. Ferguson.*** The Supreme Court decided on May 18 in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that "separate but equal" facilities satisfy Fourteenth Amendment guarantees, thus giving legal sanction to Jim Crow segregation laws.

**Black women organize.** The National Association of Colored Women was formed on July 21; Mary Church Terrell was chosen president.

**McKinley elected president.** On November 3, William McKinley (Republican) was elected president.

**George Washington Carver.** George Washington Carver was appointed director of agricultural research at Tuskegee Institute. His work advanced peanut, sweet potato, and soybean farming.

**Lynchings.** Seventy-eight black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1896.

## 1897

**American Negro Academy.** The American Negro Academy was established on March 5 to encourage African-American participation in art, literature and philosophy.

**Lynchings.** One hundred and twenty-three black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1897.

## 1898

**The Spanish-American War.** The Spanish-American War began on April 21. Sixteen regiments of black volunteers were recruited; four saw combat. Five black Americans won Congressional Medals of Honor.

**The National Afro-American Council.** Founded on September 15, the National Afro-American Council elected Bishop Alexander Walters its first president.

**A race riot.** On November 10, in Wilmington, North Carolina, eight black Americans were killed during white rioting.

**Black-owned insurance companies.** The North Carolina Mutual and Provident Insurance Company and the National Benefit Life Insurance Company of Washington, DC were established. Both companies were black-owned.

**Lynchings.** One hundred and one black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1898.

## 1899

**A lynching protest.** The Afro-American Council designated June 4 as a national day of fasting to protest lynchings and massacres.

**Lynchings.** Eighty-five black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1899.

## 1900

**Census of 1900.**

U.S. population: 75,994,575

Black population: 8,833,994 (11.6%)

**Lynchings.** One hundred and six black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1900.

**A World's Fair.** The Paris Exposition was held, and the United States pavilion housed an exhibition on black Americans. The "Exposition des Negres d'Amerique" won several awards for excellence. Daniel A. P. Murray's collection of works by and about black Americans was developed for this exhibition.

## Time Line of African American History, 1901-1925

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### 1901

**The last African-American congressman for 28 years.** George H. White gave up his seat on March 4. No African-American would serve in Congress for the next 28 years.

**President McKinley assassinated.** President McKinley died of an assassin's bullet on September 14, a week after being shot in Buffalo, New York. Vice President Theodore Roosevelt succeeded him as president.

**Washington dines at the White House.** On October 16, after an afternoon meeting at the White House with Booker T. Washington, President Theodore Roosevelt informally invited Washington to remain and eat dinner with him, making Washington the first black American to dine at the White House with the president. A furor arose over the social implications of Roosevelt's casual act.

**Lynchings.** One hundred and five black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1901.

### 1902

**Lynchings.** Eighty-five black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1902.

### 1903

**The Souls of Black Folk.** W. E. B. Du Bois's celebrated book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, was published on April 27. In it, Du Bois rejected the gradualism of Booker T. Washington, calling for agitation on behalf of African-American rights.

**Lynchings.** Eighty-four black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1903.

### 1904

**College founded.** Educator Mary McCleod Bethune founds a college in Daytona Beach, Florida, known today as Bethune-Cookman College.

**Lynchings.** Seventy-six black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1904.

## 1905

**The Niagara Movement.** On July 11-13, African-American intellectuals and activists, led by W. E. B. Du Bois and William Monroe Trotter, began the Niagara Movement.

**Lynchings.** Fifty-seven black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1905.

## 1906

**Soldiers riot.** In Brownsville, Texas on August 13, black troops rioted against segregation. On November 6, President Theodore Roosevelt discharged three companies of black soldiers involved in the riot.

**A race riot.** On September 22-24, in a race riot in Atlanta, ten blacks and two whites were killed.

**Lynchings.** Sixty-two black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1906.

## 1908

**Thurgood Marshall born.** Born in Baltimore on July 2, Thurgood Marshall, was the attorney for the NAACP in the famous case of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), in which the Supreme Court found segregated schools to be inherently unequal. He later became the first African-American appointed to the Supreme Court.

**A race riot.** Many were killed and wounded in a race riot on August 14-19, in Abraham Lincoln's home town of Springfield, Illinois.

**Taft elected president.** On November 3, William Howard Taft (Republican) was elected president.

**Lynchings.** Eighty-nine black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1908.

## 1909

**The NAACP is formed.** On February 12 -- the centennial of the birth of Lincoln -- a national appeal led to the establishment of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, an organization formed to promote use of the courts to restore the legal rights of black Americans.

**The North Pole is reached.** On April 6, Admiral Peary and African-American Matthew Henson, accompanied by four Eskimos, became the first men known to have reached the North Pole.

**Lynchings.** Sixty-nine black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1909.

## 1910

### **Census of 1910.**

U.S. population: 93,402,151

Black population: 9,827,763 (10.7%)

**Crisis debuts.** The first issue of *Crisis*, a publication sponsored by the NAACP and edited by W. E.B. Du Bois, appeared on November 1.

**Segregated neighborhoods.** On December 19, the City Council of Baltimore approved the first city ordinance designating the boundaries of black and white neighborhoods. This ordinance was followed by similar ones in Dallas, Texas, Greensboro, North Carolina, Louisville, Kentucky, Norfolk, Virginia, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, Richmond, Virginia, Roanoke, Virginia, and St. Louis, Missouri. The Supreme Court declared the Louisville ordinance to be unconstitutional in 1917.

- Lynchings.** Sixty-seven black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1910.
- 1911**
- The National Urban League begins.** In October, the National Urban League was organized to help African-Americans secure equal employment. Professor Kelly Miller was a founding member.
- Lynchings.** Sixty black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1911.
- 1912**
- Wilson elected president.** Woodrow Wilson (Democrat) was elected president on November 5.
- Lynchings.** Sixty-one black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1912.
- 1913**
- Jubilee year.** The fiftieth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation was celebrated throughout the year.
- Harriet Tubman dies.** Harriet Tubman -- former slave, abolitionist, and freedom fighter -- died on March 10.
- Federal segregation.** On April 11, the Wilson administration began government-wide segregation of work places, rest rooms and lunch rooms.
- Lynchings.** Fifty-one black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1913.
- 1914**
- Lynchings.** Fifty-one black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1914.
- World War I.** World War I began in Europe.
- 1915**
- Booker T. Washington dies.** Renowned African-American spokesman Booker T. Washington died on November 14.
- Lynchings.** Fifty-six black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1915.
- 1916**
- Lynchings.** Fifty black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1916.
- 1917**
- World War I.** America entered World War I on April 6. 370,000 African-Americans were in military service -- more than half in the French war zone.
- A race riot.** One of the bloodiest race riots in the nation's history took place in East St. Louis, Illinois, on July 1-3. A Congressional committee reported that 40 to 200 people were killed, hundreds more injured, and 6,000 driven from their homes.
- NAACP protest.** Thousands of African-Americans marched down Manhattan's Fifth Avenue on July 28, protesting lynchings, race riots, and the denial of rights.
- A race riot.** On August 23, a riot erupted in Houston between black soldiers and white citizens; 2 blacks and 11 whites were killed. 18 black soldiers were hanged for participation in the riot.
- The Supreme Court acts.** On November 5, the Supreme Court struck down the Louisville, Kentucky ordinance mandating segregated neighborhoods.
- Lynchings.** Thirty-six black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1917.
- 1918**
- A race riot.** On July 25-28, a race riot occurred in Chester, Pennsylvania. 3 blacks and 2 whites were killed.

**A race riot.** On July 26-29, a race riot occurred in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. 3 blacks and 1 white were killed.

**World War I ends.** The Armistice took effect on November 11, ending World War I. The northern migration of African-Americans began in earnest during the war. By 1930 there were 1,035,000 more black Americans in the North, and 1,143,000 fewer black Americans in the South than in 1910.

**Lynchings.** Sixty black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1918.

## 1919

**"Red Summer."** This was the year of the "Red Summer," with 26 race riots between the months of April and October. These included disturbances in the following areas:

May 10	Charleston, South Carolina.
July 13	Gregg and Longview counties, Texas.
July 19-23	Washington, D. C.
July 27	Chicago.
October 1-3	Elaine, Arkansas.

**Lynchings.** Seventy-six black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1919.

## 1920

### Census of 1920.

U.S. population: 105,710,620  
Black population: 10,463,131 (9.9%)

**The Harlem Renaissance.** The decade of the Twenties witnessed the Harlem Renaissance, a remarkable period of creativity for black writers, poets, and artists, including these authors:

Claude McKay, *Harlem Shadows*, 1922  
Jean Toomer, *Cane*, 1923  
Alaine Locke, *The New Negro*, 1925  
Countee Cullen, *Color*, 1925

**The rise of Marcus Garvey.** On August 1, Marcus Garvey's Universal Improvement Association held its national convention in Harlem, the traditionally black neighborhood in New York City. Garvey's African nationalist movement was the first black American mass movement, and at its height it claimed hundreds of thousands of supporters.

**Harding elected president.** On November 3, Warren G. Harding (Republican) was elected president.

**Lynchings.** Fifty-three black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1920.

## 1921

**A race riot.** On May 31-June 1, in a race riot in Tulsa, Oklahoma, 21 whites and 60 blacks were killed. The violence destroyed a thriving African American neighborhood and business district.

**Lynchings.** Fifty-nine black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1921.

## 1922

**An anti-lynching effort.** On January 26, a federal anti-lynching bill was killed by a filibuster in the United States Senate.

**Lynchings.** Fifty-one black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1922.

**1923**

**President Harding dies.** President Warren Harding died on August 3; Vice President Calvin Coolidge succeeded him as president.

**Lynchings.** Twenty-nine black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1923.

**1924**

**Lynchings.** Sixteen black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1924.

**1925**

**Malcolm X born.** On May 19, in Omaha, Nebraska, civil rights leader Malcolm X was born.

**Sleeping car porters organize.** On August 25, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters was organized. A. Philip Randolph was chosen president.

**Lynchings.** Seventeen black Americans are known to have been lynched in 1925.

**Daniel A. P. Murray dies.** Assistant Librarian of Congress and African-American historian Daniel A. P. Murray died in Washington, DC, on March 31.

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